

Brussels, 31 May 2007

Kimberley Process review visit to Zimbabwe to assess implementation of scheme to combat conflict diamonds

The Kimberley Process, chaired by the European Community in 2007, is sending a review visit to Zimbabwe from 29 May to 2 June 2007 at the invitation of its government. The team will assess the implementation of Kimberley Process rules in Zimbabwe. The team is led by the Russian Federation, with representatives from Norway, South Africa, the World Diamond Council and civil society (Partnership Africa Canada) and will meet relevant stakeholders in Zimbabwe.

European Commissioner for External Relations and Neighbourhood Policy, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, said *"This review visit illustrates the determination of the Kimberley Process to ensure a robust monitoring system, and its determination to react swiftly and decisively and work with all member countries and partners to eliminate hiding places for conflict diamonds."*

Zimbabwe has invited a review visit from the Kimberley Process to assess its implementation of Kimberley Process rules. These rules require participating countries to implement effective controls over the production, import and export of rough diamonds.

The review visit will assess the implementation of these measures in accordance with the standard terms of reference for such visits agreed by Kimberley Process participants in 2003. At their most recent Plenary meeting in Gaborone, Botswana in November 2006, Kimberley Process participants noted that the vast majority of participating countries had already invited review visits. The Plenary agreed to launch a second round of review visits; this visit to Zimbabwe is the first of the second round.

During its visit the team will meet relevant stakeholders involved in KP implementation and go to the main mining areas of Zimbabwe.

Following recent developments in the diamond sector in Zimbabwe, the Kimberley Process has been closely monitoring the situation. As part of this effort, the Government of Zimbabwe has provided regular reports and has invited a review visit.

Background

The Kimberley Process grew out of discussions in May 2000 in Kimberley, South Africa among interested governments, the international diamond industry and civil society, as a unique initiative to combat 'conflict diamonds' – rough diamonds used to finance devastating conflicts in the 1990s in some of Africa's diamond-producing countries. The Kimberley Process is backed by the United Nations; in December 2000, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution supporting the creation of an international certification scheme for rough diamonds, renewed most recently in December 2006.

In November 2002, an agreement was reached on the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS): an innovative system imposing extensive requirements on all Participants to control all imports and exports of rough diamonds and to put in place rigorous internal controls over production and trade to ensure that conflict diamonds could not enter the legal diamond trade. In four years, the Kimberley Process has helped to reduce the amount of conflict diamonds to a tiny fraction of world trade.

The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme now has 46 Participants (representing 72 countries, with the European Community counting as a single Participant), including all major diamond producing, trading and polishing centres, and counts on the active participation of civil society and industry groups. Its most recent addition was Liberia, admitted on 4 May 2007, following the positive assessment of Kimberley Process experts and the decision of the UN Security Council to lift diamond sanctions.

To increase the effectiveness of the Kimberley Process, its requirements – including effective internal controls over diamond production and trade – must be applied in full by all Participants. The Kimberley Process has developed a number of tools to enable assessment of implementation and to address any issues which may arise. These tools include regular statistical reporting, annual reports and other compliance verification measures, such as review missions to participants who show 'credible indications of significant non-compliance'. In October 2003, the Kimberley Process members agreed a comprehensive system of peer review. Since then, virtually all Participants have invited peer review visits. To date, nearly 40 review visits have been carried out, as well as a number of ad hoc monitoring missions, expert missions to applicant countries and review missions in cases of suspected non-compliance. Peer review teams are composed of representatives of governments, industry and civil society.

For further details, please see:

The EU & the Kimberley Process:

http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external_relations/kimb/intro/index.htm

www.kimberleyprocess.com